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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Pshtyka, V. V. (2011). Diplomatic protocol as a tool of international economic relations. *Baltic Region*, 4, 86-89. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2011-4-11>

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UDK 339.9

**DIPLOMATIC
PROTOCOL
AS A TOOL
OF INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC RELATIONS**

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Both the official (state and diplomatic) and business protocols are frequently used in Europe; in Russia, it has become a focus of attention in recent years. Thus, there arises a need of training specialists in protocol. However, this aspect has not been tackled effectively by Russian universities.

This article is aimed at identifying the need for the professional study of protocol at Russian universities.

The paper analyses the level of teaching protocol disciplines in Europe and Russia and considers the results of the first Russian forum on protocol. The main conclusion drawn is that there is a need for introducing a qualification of an expert in protocol into Russian science. This research will help Russian universities create training plans for protocol disciplines.

Key words: diplomatic protocol, state protocol, business protocol, international economic relations

Today, international relations bring together companies from more than 200 countries of the world. And each state has its own political situation, history, traditions, and culture; each company, in its turn, has its articles of association and its own requirements for partners and staff. All this causes serious complications for the development of international ties. However, after the international rules and standards regulating different intergovernmental relations (from non-interference in internal affairs to the formatting of business letters) were introduced, the establishment of mutually beneficial and respectful relations in the international arena were simplified [1].

The mechanism of implementing the principles of international communication is the diplomatic protocol, whose standards were secured by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

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Received on July 12, 2011.

Among the multitude of definitions of diplomatic protocol, one can single out the following: “a body of generally accepted rules, traditions, and conventions observed by governments, departments of foreign affairs, diplomatic representatives and employees, and other officials in international relations” [2, p. 108]. This definition is the most comprehensive and reflects the essence of protocol international activities.

The word *protocol* is derived from the Greek *protokollan* (first glue) — in the Middle Ages this phrase referred to paperwork and archive management. In the Russian language, the word is still used in its original meaning. Later, the word *protocol* was borrowed into diplomatic communication: in Byzantium, it was used to denote the first part of a ceremonial document containing the list of high officials. In the course of time, the word *protocol* started to be used to denote the etiquette of diplomacy [3].

The standards of the diplomatic protocol were not “invented” or developed by an individual country or a team of diplomats — they were a result of long-standing relations between states. Thus, protocol is a historical political category [4].

The protocol practices fall into the official (state, diplomatic) and business ones. State protocol regulates relations taking place at the national level, the spheres of diplomatic protocol is international relations. Recently, the problems of application of business protocol regulating the relations in business environment with the help of rules and standards developed in international and national protocol practices have come to the foreground [1].

Large companies more and more often employ protocol specialists. Protocol structures — departments and whole divisions — are established depending on the level of the company, the number of partners, especially international ones.

Business protocol is close to state and diplomatic ones in many respects, since it rests on the same bases. However, the rules of business protocol are more flexible and can be easier adapted to certain features of a given situation.

In the Western practice of partner relations, the standards of business protocol were developed a long time ago, and specialists in protocol are in demands both at public and private institutions. For example, in the USA, protocol departments are an integral element of all public civil and military structures — from the White House to universities [3]. In Russia, the qualification of a specialist in protocol is still rare, but the demand for it is increasing.

Earlier, the bases of protocol practices were studied only by representatives of diplomatic circles, whereas now this knowledge became essential for the business community. In the modern world, where business plays a significant role in the economic development of each state, when international ties of Russian companies are expanding, the awareness of the subtleties of cross-cultural communication and protocol nuances acquires certain significance, especially at large companies operating at the international level.

Business protocol is a tool used by business people for making partner relations in the course of the establishment of an international joint venture, whose number has increased considerably over the recent years. Successful cooperation between Russian and international companies depends to a great extent on heads of protocol services of partner enterprises being able to effi-

ciently organise negotiations, competently handle correspondence, and professionally manage round tables — all these activities are regulated by protocol practices. The foreign economic relations of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are closely connected to and depend to a significant degree on protocol practices.

International economic relations of Russian companies are actively developing at the moment. Companies, especially those located in border regions, expand and deepen their contacts with international partners. Thus, employees of the companies aspiring to the international business scene, as well as maintaining their position there, require sufficient knowledge of diplomatic and business protocol in order to establish relations with partners — potential investors in Russian businesses.

The protocol aspects of signing partner agreements are of great importance, which is sometimes underestimated despite the fact that the protocol rules regulate important elements of successful partner cooperation with foreign counterparts. Business correspondence, negotiation process, drawing up contracts and agreements — all the rules and standards integral to state and diplomatic protocol — are effectively used within business protocol.

The standards of cross-cultural communication and protocol are important for forging long-term partner economic relations in the international arena. At the same time, it is worth noting that most Russian businesspeople are less acquainted with protocol rules than their international partners. Economic cooperation at the international level requires the awareness of the subtleties and nuances of protocol practices of the partner countries. Different aspects should be taken into account: the level of the meeting, organisation of negotiations, social activities, etc. All this becomes a factor of successful business, which is of equal importance as a correctly drawn up contract and the profitability of production.

Disciplines studying the rules of protocol activities are taught in Russia only at several universities: MGIMO University of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration are training specialists in protocol. However, it is impossible to receive an education in the field of diplomatic and state protocol in the Russian Federation, because this specialisation is absent in the Russian educational sphere.

In Europe, it is not only an established qualification, but there are also special universities, such as the International School of Protocol and Diplomacy in Brussels training highly qualified specialists in protocol, who are in demand throughout the world [5].

At the beginning of June 2011, Moscow hosted the first Protocol Service international forum [6]. The chief moderator of the forum was V. N. Shevchenko — the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, the chairperson of the National Protocol Association. This event brought together leading national and international specialists in protocol and it was an important step towards the consolidation of professional protocol community. The forum resulted in the establishment of the National Association of Protocol Specialists. The forum will become an annual event, and the National Association of Protocol Specialists will aspire to introduce

internationally acknowledged standards of business communication into the practice of Russian public bodies and business circles, as well as the accumulation and structuring of knowledge in the field of diplomatic and state protocol.

Recently, the importance of application of business protocol has been put on a par with diplomatic and state protocol. Moreover, the knowledge of the subtleties of business protocol contributes to the professional aptitude of businesspeople, who are interested in employing a protocol specialist. This qualification is increasingly in demand in the Russian labour market in different spheres — from the Olympic organisational committee to protocol departments of regional governments.

The Protocol Service international forum is a proof that protocol procedures become relevant and popular in the territory of our country not only in the sphere of diplomacy, but also within the business community and in the field of education. The development and introduction of the discipline — and later the specialisation — in state, diplomatic, and business protocol at universities will contribute to the emergence of highly qualified specialists in this field.

Today, only a few Russian universities offer professional courses in protocol. In my opinion, many Russian universities should consider as early as today the development of training programmes, standards, and materials and start training protocol specialists.

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